

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD

Docket No. 8390

Petition of Vermont Department of Public)
Service for an investigation into the adequacy of)
Telephone Operating Company of Vermont)
LLC, d/b/a FairPoint Communications,)
provision of service quality)

Order entered: 1/13/2015

ORDER RE SERVICE QUALITY & BILLING ISSUES

I. INTRODUCTION

In this Order, the Vermont Public Service Board ("Board") directs FairPoint¹ to answer questions about its service quality and billing practices. The Board also appoints a Hearing Officer to develop an evidentiary record and to make recommendations to the Board, as warranted, to address the concerns reflected in this Order.

II. DISCUSSION

Over the past several months, the Board has observed a significant increase in the number of service quality complaints from FairPoint customers. Of particular concern to us are the complaints we have received from vulnerable customers (i.e., individuals with health or safety needs who must have access to uninterrupted service in case of an emergency) and landline-dependent customers whose service is interrupted or not operating correctly for more than 24 hours.

Questions for FairPoint

Given the complaints that the Board has been receiving, we want to ensure that FairPoint is giving the highest priority service to vulnerable customers. We also want to confirm that

1. References in this Order to "FairPoint" are references to the Telephone Operating Company of Vermont LLC, d/b/a FairPoint Communications.

FairPoint is adhering to Board Rule 7.609(C) by properly crediting customers who have experienced service interruptions in excess of 24 hours. Accordingly, we direct FairPoint to answer the following questions:

1. Please provide a detailed description of:
 - (a) the number of customers for the past six months who have contacted FairPoint reporting a service outage exceeding 24 hours, broken down by month and by length of the outage in hours;²
 - (b) the number of customers that Fairpoint knows have experienced or are currently experiencing a service outage exceeding 24 hours, broken down by month and by length of the outage in hours;
 - (c) the average delay for service restoration for the customers identified in paragraphs 1(a) and 1(b);
 - (d) the number of customers for the past six months who have received a bill credit pursuant to Board Rule 7.609(C), broken down by month;
 - (e) the total dollar amount FairPoint has credited customers pursuant to Board Rule 7.609(C) for the past six months; and
 - (f) if the bill credits do not apply to all services, please identify the services for which FairPoint provides credits and those for which it does not provide credits.
2. Is FairPoint providing all of the bill credits required by Board Rule 7.609(c)? If not, then please explain why not.
 - (a) Please describe in detail FairPoint's procedures for identifying when a customer's service has been interrupted for more than 24 hours and how FairPoint appropriately credits that customer for the time period of the interruption.
 - (b) Does a customer whose service is interrupted for more than 24 hours have to ask FairPoint for a bill credit, or does FairPoint proactively credit customers absent a direct customer request?
3. What steps is FairPoint taking to give highest priority to the resolution of customer service complaints from vulnerable customers?
 - (a) Please provide a detailed description of the procedures and practices FairPoint has in place to effectuate this prioritization.

2. In responding to these questions, FairPoint should treat repeat trouble reports or complaints from the same customer about a service outage as a single incident even if FairPoint initially considered the matter to be resolved.

FairPoint shall file its answers to our questions by January 21, 2015, and provide copies to all of the parties in this docket. Other parties may submit comments no later than January 28, 2015.

Appointment of Hearing Officer

The Board will appoint a hearing officer for the limited purpose of making recommendations to the Board, as warranted, regarding how to address concerns over extended service restoration periods and the prioritization of vulnerable customers. The hearing officer shall develop an evidentiary record to consider these matters and may convene an evidentiary hearing to do so if need be.

SO ORDERED.

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont, this 13th day of January, 2015.

<u>s/James Volz</u>)	
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)	
<u>s/John D. Burke</u>)	BOARD
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<u>s/Margaret Cheney</u>)	OF VERMONT

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

FILED: January 13, 2015

ATTEST: s/Susan M. Hudson
Clerk of the Board

NOTICE TO READERS: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Board (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: psb.clerk@state.vt.us)